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THE WATERLOO CAMPAIGN: THE TENETS OF CAMPAIGNING

BY

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United States Marine Corps

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USAWC MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM PAPER

THE WATERLOO CAMPAIGN: THE TENETS OF CAMPAIGNING

AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT

by

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ABSTRACT

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From 15-18 June, 1815, Napoleon conducted and lost his Waterloo campaign. The battle of Waterloo, aptly identified as one of history's fifteen decisive battles, and the associated campaign presents volumes of lessons for the military professional. In this regard, it is of particular interest to the study of the tenets of campaigning. Napoleon's campaign plan considered and planned for the application of all of the tenets of campaigning as they are recognized today. During the course of the campaign, however, Napoleon strayed from the tenets, thus contributing to the campaign's eventual failure. This case study reviews the Waterloo campaign as envisioned and executed by Napoleon, specifically the tenets of campaigning.

INTRODUCTION

Within this century military professionals have focused much attention, thought and study to the subject of campaigning and campaign planning. Within the past decade the United States Army has focused even more closely on the subject. Indeed, the past several years have seen a multitude of professional papers and manuals devoted to the subject of campaigning. Campaigning though, is hardly a new idea. Campaigning has existed as long as organized armies. Campaigning has been understood and practiced by all the great military figures of history. In this regard, perhaps no one individual better understood the subject than Napoleon. Although he published no formal manuals and never codified the subject, Napoleon was an accomplished master of campaigning. A review of Napoleon's military operations will show that he understood and fully employed what we, today, widely recognize as the tenets of campaigning. Accordingly, this paper will provide a case study of Napoleon's application of the tenets of campaigning during his Waterloo campaign of June, 1815.

But why Waterloo? After all, Napoleon suffered a decisive defeat at Waterloo. His great defeat, however, makes this campaign all the more interesting as a case study. All of his successful campaigns, Italy 1796-97 and 1800, Austerlitz 1805 and Jena 1806, to name but a few, reflect the correct application of the tenets of campaigning. So did Waterloo, at least for the most part. When he began the campaign Napoleon was fully applying all the tenets. As the campaign developed however, he strayed from some of these tenets, thus, at least partially contributing to his defeat. Waterloo presents an interesting case study due to the success and failure of Napoleon's application of the tenets of campaigning.

THE CASE STUDY

In order to apply the tenets of campaigning to the Waterloo campaign it is necessary to review these tenets as we now know them. One should remember that these tenets are common or

accepted beliefs; standards which apply to all campaign planning:

-Provides broad concepts of operations and sustainment to achieve strategic military objectives in a theater of war and theater of operations, the basis for all other planning

-Provides an orderly schedule of strategic military decisions, displays the commander's vision and intent

- Orients on the enemy's center of gravity

-Phases a series of related military operations

-Composes subordinate forces and designates command relationships

-Provides operational direction and tasks to subordinates

-Synchronizes air, land and sea efforts into a cohesive and synergistic whole; joint in nature. (For purposes of this study, the application of this last tenet is, of course, limited. Napoleon had no air forces and even though the French fleet had, by 1815, numerically recovered from Trafalgar, it would play no part in the campaign.)

To begin to understand the Waterloo campaign it is necessary to understand its background. In April, 1814, Napoleon had been forced to abdicate and had been exiled by the members of the Sixth Coalition to the island of Elba. In the subsequent ten months, while the Allies met in Vienna and debated and squabbled over the spoils of their victory, Napoleon watched, listened and planned for his return to the throne of France. In February, 1815, he judged the time to be right and escaped from Elba. Landing in southern France with less than a thousand troops he led a bloodless march to Paris, which he reached in early March. King Louis XVIII fled at his approach. Once again, Napoleon was Emperor of France. His escape and successful, in many respects triumphant, return amply demonstrated his keen sense of opportunism, but could he retain his throne? The major drawback to the timing of his escape was the fact that the Allies were still meeting in Vienna. The Allies, England, Prussia, Austria and Russia being the primary ones, immediately proclaimed the formation of the Seventh Coalition, dedicating armies and money

to a final destruction of Napoleon. Moreover, they declared Napoleon an outlaw, focusing on him, vice the people of France as the enemy. Consequently, Napoleon realized that his survival depended upon making peace or defeating the armies of the Allies.

From early in his return up to the beginning of the Waterloo campaign, Napoleon launched continuous quests for peace. In addition to the efforts of his ambassadors, he sent many personal letters seeking peace to various Allied sovereigns. He realized that France was in poor shape to go to war and thus he had to strive for a peaceful settlement. Despite his earnest efforts, the Allies in Vienna had ruled out any negotiations with Napoleon. Therefore, Napoleon's only alternative was war. The defeat of the Seventh Coalition became his strategic objective.

To apply the Army War College strategy model of "ends are equal to ways plus means," to Napoleon's situation, the "end" Napoleon sought was the dissolution of the Coalition on terms

favorable to himself. The "way" he would reach this "end" would be to militarily defeat the armies of the Coalition. In the past, the military "way" had dissolved five prior Coalitions, but now, his "means" were decidedly limited. Napoleon's resources of economic, political and military power were all in short supply. Economically, twenty-five years of war had drained France. Napoleon's defeat in 1814 resulted in the loss of French colonies as well as much of the territory added to France by Napoleon's prior military conquests. Louis XVIII, who prior to his return had lived off the English dole, lost no time in grabbing what little remained of the French treasury. Politically, Napoleon was even weaker. In this war he would have no allies. Within a week of his return in March, he had drafted a new constitution, but the people were completely apathetic to it. Compared with Louis XVIII, they seemed to view Napoleon as the lesser of two evils. Only a fraction of the populace voted in the constitutional plebiscite. Worse, for Napoleon, only 80 of 629 members of the Chamber of

Representatives belonged to Napoleon's Bonapartist party. Napoleon ruled by default. He could expect the people to tolerate his rule only as long as he remained successful. The people certainly were not eager for another war. Yet, war was Napoleon's only viable alternative and militarily, France was weaker now than it had been in twenty years. Louis XVIII had severely reduced the size of the army. This reduction had left much of its leadership unemployed. Although the existing rank and file welcomed the return of Napoleon, many of the Marshals had remained loyal to Louis XVIII and had fled with him. Others were too old for continued active service. Of the remaining Marshals, Napoleon could count on the services of only a select few.

The many challenges which faced Napoleon seemed insurmountable, but undaunted, he set to planning the only option that could insure his survival. Certainly his time was limited. With the Allied declaration of the Seventh Coalition on 25 March, Napoleon calculated that the enemy armies would be

prepared to invade by early July. Therefore, he must mobilize an army by then. Also, with no allies of his own, Napoleon must have realized that awaiting the enemy and fighting on the defensive would only result in his eventual defeat. To accomplish his objective, he must take offensive action. Yet, due to the limited time and forces available, any offensive must be limited in time and distance. In this regard, his theater of war would be limited to France and the immediate border areas. He could expect the Prussian, Austrian and Russia armies to advance along the shortest route to France, i.e., through Germany. Accordingly, he would defend his Italian and Spanish borders with only limited forces. As events transpired, England and Prussia were the first of the Allies to position forces in the field, in Belgium and Holland. The arrival of the English and Prussians allowed Napoleon to develop a concept of operations.

Napoleon had realized that the Allied strategic center of gravity was the cohesiveness of the Coalition. Since his peace

overtures had failed, he knew that only a severe military defeat would disrupt the cohesiveness of the Coalition. In this regard, the arrival of the English and Prussians promised great opportunity. The English and Prussians had proven to be his most tenacious and dangerous enemies. If he could defeat them it was not unreasonable to expect the Austrian and Russian resolve to waver. After all, the Austrian emperor was his father-in-law and the Russian Tsar had been ambivalent about placing Louis XVIII on the throne. By May, then, Napoleon's operational concept devolved into an offensive aimed at the defeat of the nearby English and Prussian armies. The concept held promise and although first to mobilize, the English and Prussians presented some weaknesses. In order to cover the maximum extent of the border area with France, their armies had not combined. Thus, they presented Napoleon the opportunity he would need to defeat each of their armies in detail. Moreover, the English, in western Belgium, had their lines of communication moving back to the channel coast. The Prussians,

in eastern Belgium, had their lines of communication running back towards their bases in Germany. Napoleon's defeat of either could be expected to force their withdrawal away from each other. Additionally, the English army, led by the Duke of Wellington, was only half English. The other half was, for the most part, Dutch and Belgian, troops which fought for Napoleon the previous year. In fact, some of these had even been members of Napoleon's formidable Imperial Guard. By defeating the English Napoleon could also expect many of these Dutch and Belgians to revert to his command. Having disposed of his most inveterate enemies, Napoleon could turn to face the slower mobilized armies of Austria and Russia. With a little luck, Austria and Russia would choose to negotiate vice fight. By early June Napoleon's campaign plan was well refined. In it can be clearly discerned what we know today as the tenets of campaigning:

-Provides broad concepts of operations and sustainment to achieve strategic military objectives in a theater of war and

theater of operations, the basis for all other planning

Napoleon would aim to defeat the English and Prussian armies separately in Belgium and Holland, his primary theater of operations. Elsewhere in the theater of war, smaller French armies would defend the borders through economy of force operations. Interestingly, to achieve his strategic objective, the defeat of the Coalition, Napoleon had two enemy operational centers of gravity, the English and Prussian armies respectively. To do so he would employ the strategy of the central position that he had used so well in prior campaigns. His offensive would aim between the two enemy armies, keeping them separate, or, better still, causing them to withdraw further apart. Thus, his lines of operation would be interior. His lines of communication were relatively short back to his bases in France. By taking the offensive he could also expect to deflect any enemy moves against his lines of communication.

-Provides an orderly schedule of strategic military decisions, displays the commanders vision and intent

Clearly, the offensive against the English and Prussians would be Napoleon's main effort. He would advance quickly between them and give battle to each separately. Certainly he must have realized that should the two unite, he would be outnumbered over two to one. Napoleon would therefore, be brought to his culminating point. Should the English and Prussians effect a junction of their two armies, the odds against a French victory would be numerically too great, the concept for the whole campaign would collapse, and, with it, any hopes for Napoleon to retain his throne. How clearly Napoleon expressed his vision and intent to his subordinates is a subject open to debate. Within the understanding or misunderstanding of his vision and intent lay the future of the campaign.

-Orients on the enemy's center of gravity

As stated previously, to attain his strategic objective, Napoleon had two operational enemy centers of gravity, the English and Prussian armies.

-Phases a series of related major operations

In broad form, Napoleon's Waterloo campaign plan devolved into five phases:

1) Concentration. The French army would mass on the Belgian border in great secrecy and in a position from which it could advance and split the English and Prussians.

2) Movement to contact. The French army would cross the border. The army would be divided into two wings of two corps each and a central reserve consisting of one small corps and the Imperial Guard. Although Napoleon seemed to expect a battle with the English first, he would allow circumstances to develop the situation.

3) Defeat the first enemy army. The wing that first encountered the enemy would be reinforced by the reserve and give battle. The other wing would be charged with keeping the other enemy army out of the battle.

4) Drive the first enemy army back on its line of communications while concurrently massing to defeat the second enemy army.

5) Reorganization and reorientation. Napoleon could expect the defeat of the English to result in their speedy embarkation and departure from the theater of war. Their lines of communication and location in the western corner of Belgium would leave them no other choice. Likewise, he could expect a Prussian defeat to result in their withdrawal along their lines of communication back into Germany. Victorious, the French army would reorient and prepare to meet the Austrians and Russians. During this period, Napoleon could hope to join more French troops that had not been mobilized in time for the initial offensive. He could also hope to enlarge his army by addition of his former Dutch and Belgian allies to whom he had demonstrated the folly of standing with the English. At the same time he would launch a renewed diplomatic offensive, hoping the defeat of the English and Prussians would negate the necessity of giving battle to the Austrians and Russians.

-Composes subordinate forces and designates command relationships

As planned, small French armies would engage in economy of force operations to forestall any moves by the Austrians and Russians. General Rapp was given command of 24,000 troops to guard the Rhine frontier. Marshal Suchet commanded a similar number watching the border with Italy. Yet smaller bodies of troops would guard the Spanish border. Marshal Davout, as Minister of War, would remain in Paris and continue his task of mobilizing more troops and sustaining those in the field. More importantly, Davout would insure that the capital remained secure against any anti-Napoleon intrigues. Finally as was his custom, Napoleon himself would command the main army, 120,000 strong. He appointed Marshal Soult as his chief of staff. Eventually, he appointed Marshals Ney and Grouchy to command the left and right wings respectively.

-Provides operational direction and tasks to subordinates

Napoleon's whole concept was so simple one would expect only a minimum of direction to be necessary. As will be seen, however, much of the reason for the failure of the

campaign pertained to this tenet.

-Synchronizes air, land and sea efforts into a synergistic whole

Although air and sea efforts did not apply, all other efforts were focused on support of the main effort against the English and Prussians. To this end, Napoleon employed great measures to hide the movement to and concentration of his army on the Belgian border. A misinformation campaign was begun by French agents throughout Europe and, particularly in, Belgium. This misinformation was complemented by Napoleon's continued peace negotiations. As the army moved to concentrate in early June, Napoleon sealed his borders. No commerce, mail or travellers were permitted into or out of France. Lastly, to further deceive the enemy, Napoleon delayed his own departure for the front until the last possible moment.

A brief analysis of the campaign as it now unfolded is necessary to compare its conduct with the tenets of campaigning.

During the concentration phase, between the end of May and 14

June, Napoleon brilliantly succeeded in secretly massing the army on a narrow twenty mile front along the Belgian border. The army was ideally positioned, poised between the concentration areas of the English and Prussians. By taking advantage of the existing road networks in the vicinity of Charleroi, Napoleon prepared to keep his enemies separate and defeat them in detail.

The movement to contact phase began on 15 June. The French crossed the border, brushing aside Prussian cavalry patrols that had been posted as lookouts. For some reason, Napoleon expected to meet the English first. Early in the morning of the 16th he wrote to Marshal Grouchy "...my intention being to operate with my left wing, which is commanded by Marshal Ney, against the English."[1] However, the lethargic English response to Napoleon's advance precluded meeting the English first. Contrary to Napoleon's expectations that the Prussians, under Marshal Blucher, would avoid an early battle, Blucher drove the Prussian army forward to mass at Ligny, opposing Grouchy's wing.

By mid morning on the 16th, Napoleon became convinced that Grouchy was faced by the majority of the Prussian army.

So began phase three of the campaign. In accordance with his campaign plan to let events dictate which enemy the French would battle first, Napoleon turned his attentions to the Prussians. Ney received orders to "...attack whatever force is before you, and after vigorously driving it back, you will turn in our direction, so as to bring about the envelopment of those enemy troops (Blucher)." [4] During the afternoon and evening of the 16th, Napoleon used Grouchy's wing and the Imperial Guard to administer a serious defeat to Blucher. His victory, however, was not to prove as decisive as he had hoped. As he had forewarned Ney, Napoleon called upon Ney for the support of one corps. Confusion in the transmission and execution of this order caused this corps to not participate at Ligny. Further confusion as to its location even delayed Napoleon's victory until dark. Consequently, the Prussian army, although badly beaten, was still capable of battle. During the

night of 16-17 June it withdrew, fortuitously, in the direction of Wavre. The Prussian direction of withdrawal was indeed fortunate in that it parallelled the English line of operations. The Prussian chief of staff, temporarily in charge of the army due to Blucher's separation during the initial stages of the retreat, fully intended to withdraw towards Germany, as Napoleon had expected. In the confusion of the retreat though, the mass of the army had been pushed back towards Wavre. This chance movement of the Prussians would bode ill for Napoleon for it presented the potential for the Prussians to unite with the English later. French exhaustion from their advance and subsequent battle at Ligny, coupled with a severe rainstorm that began during the latter part of the battle, undoubtedly contributed to the French failure to immediately pursue the withdrawing Prussians. The chance escape of the Prussians in a fortuitous direction coupled with Marshal Ney's lack of initiative on the left wing would disrupt Napoleon's concept and significantly effect the outcome of the campaign.

Meanwhile, some six miles to the West, Ney had engaged the English. On the 15th, Napoleon had ordered Ney to occupy the crossroads at Quatre Bras. That evening, Ney reported possession of the crossroads but, had merely outposted it. The next morning Napoleon messaged Ney of his intention to join him and give battle to the English. Subsequently, Napoleon notified Ney of his intention to meet the Prussians and ordering Ney to attack any enemy in his front. While messages were going from Napoleon to Ney, Ney hesitated and lost the chance to destroy the English piecemeal as the English were marching towards Quatre Bras in a drawn out column. Early on the 16th therefore, Ney possessed the advantages of numbers, position and initiative but, did not press an attack until afternoon. The result was that he was checked by Wellington. As has been seen, despite Napoleon's order to detach a corps to Ligny, Ney failed to do so. As night fell, Ney discontinued his attack. Unaccountably, he failed to renew his attack on the 17th. Shortly before noon on the 17th Napoleon sent Ney the following

order: "resume action on Quatre Bras pending Napoleon's arrival with army."[1] Napoleon did not necessarily expect Ney to defeat the English. He did expect him to keep Wellington occupied. Moreover, uncertain of the whereabouts of the Prussians, he realized that it was imperative for Ney to fix the English in place.

Thus, around noon on the 17th, phase four of the campaign began. Napoleon detached Grouchy with the right wing to pursue the Prussians. Napoleon would move with the reserve to join Ney at Quatre Bras and defeat the English. Napoleon did not join Ney until mid afternoon and when he did he found that Ney had not launched any attack. Napoleon immediately got an attack underway which struck the English rearguard. When Wellington had learned of Blucher's defeat early on the 17th, he suspected Napoleon's next move. To forestall the coming French blow, and, once it had become obvious that Ney was remaining idle, Wellington had begun a withdrawal to the vicinity of Waterloo. He already was aware that this position would provide for a good

defense and he notified Blucher that he would stand at Waterloo if he could be assured of the support of at least one Prussian corps.[6] Blucher, who by this time had rejoined the Prussian army and had realized the potential presented by the movement towards Wavre, sent a courier to Wellington assuring him of Prussian support.

Despite Napoleon's vigorous pursuit of the English, they were able to complete their withdrawal in good order to a ridgeline below the village of Waterloo by the evening of the 17th. Like their Prussian allies on the 16th, the English withdrawal was greatly aided by another severe rainstorm. Napoleon halted when the English did, determined to join them in battle on the 18th. In the meantime, Grouchy had spent most of the day searching for the Prussians. Late on the 17th he sent a message to Napoleon informing him that at least part of the Prussian army was bound for Wavre. At six in the morning of the 18th, Grouchy forwarded another message, confirming the Prussian location at Wavre and stating his intention to follow

them there. Early on the 18th, Napoleon also divined the Prussian location. At ten that morning, he dispatched instructions to Grouchy to "...direct your movements on Wavre so as to come nearer to us, to establish operational and liaison contact with us, pushing in front of you the Prussian army corps...do not neglect to bind your communications with us." Napoleon informed Grouchy in the same message of his location and his intention to attack the English. Napoleon clearly intended Grouchy to keep the Prussians out of the coming battle, however, his latest message to Grouchy was not received until four in the afternoon.

The storm of the previous day caused Napoleon to delay his attack at Waterloo in order to allow the ground to dry sufficiently to move his guns. From around noon until early evening on the 18th, Napoleon hurled his army at the English only to be repeatedly repulsed. Blucher, true to his promise, marched three of his corps from Wavre to join the battle against Napoleon. He left his fourth corps at Wavre to occupy

Grouchy. From early afternoon, more and more Prussians joined the battle on the French right and rear. Their intervention proved decisive. The tenacity of the English defense and the necessity of fighting a second battle simultaneously against Blucher caused the French to collapse late in the day. Napoleon had suffered a decisive defeat. Although Grouchy had heard the opening of the battle at noon and had been urged by his corps commanders to march to the sound of the guns, he refused and continued to Wavre. By the time he received Napoleon's message of ten that morning, he was too far removed from the battle to intervene.

CONCLUSIONS

How then did such a brilliantly conceived plan fail? The failure of the campaign can be partially explained through the misapplication of the tenets of campaigning. Although Napoleon conceived his plan to apply all of the tenets, errors in the

application of three of these tenets contributed to the his failure.

The second tenet of campaigning provides for the commander to display his vision and intent. Napoleon's entire plan depended on separating the two enemy armies and defeating each separately. Implied in this was the need to gain and maintain contact with the enemy. How well did Napoleon express his vision and intent to Ney? One must assume that Ney received the necessary guidance, but Ney was only given command of the left wing on the afternoon of the 15th. Thereafter, except via messenger, he had no personal contact with Napoleon until the afternoon of the 17th. Whatever instructions Ney received, it does not appear he followed instructions. Ney was extremely slow in moving his wing. Despite being told to seize the crossroads at Quatre Bras he only outposted them on the 15th. On the morning of the 16th, faced with only light opposition, he failed to attack. Only by afternoon, with additional prodding from Napoleon did Ney attack. By then,

however, Wellington had just enough troops on hand to maintain his position. Worse, Ney had countermanded Napoleon's orders to send one corps to Ligny, resulting in the inability of this corps to contribute at Ligny or Quatre Bras. It spent the day marching between battlefields. Throughout his battle, Ney launched his attacks piecemeal. His slowness and failure to mass his wing denied him the opportunity to defeat each English unit as it arrived. By night of the 16th, Ney had become outnumbered, yet still possessed a strong enough force to pin Wellington in place. Still, Ney launched no attack on the 17th while he still faced the English. When Napoleon arrived on the afternoon of the 17th he found Ney's troops eating lunch. Wellington was in the act of withdrawing, encouraged by Ney's inactivity. By the time Napoleon could get an attack lined up, he encountered only the English rearguard. For Napoleon's plan to succeed, victory had not been a requirement for Ney. All Ney had to do was to provide enough pressure to fix Wellington in place. Had he done so, it seems

doubtful that Wellington could have survived on the 17th. Certainly, he would have received no Prussian support on the 17th. One must conclude that Ney did not comprehend his commander's intent, or if he did, he failed to comply with it.

The tenet which provides for the composition of subordinate forces also played a role in the failure of the campaign. The blame for the misapplication of this tenet must rest with Napoleon. Napoleon's appointment of Ney, Grouchy and Soult must be questioned. Ney's failure to fix Wellington has already been discussed. Ney was given a major command for many reasons, some political. Truly he was the "bravest of the brave" and his personal conduct in the battles of Quatre Bras and Waterloo only added to that reputation. But, as has been seen, Ney was not particularly smart. He bungled his share of the campaign badly. Napoleon should have expected as much. Ney had never proven competent at independent command. His prior actions at the battles Jena and Bautzen should have caused Napoleon worry. At those battles, his confusion over his commander's intent is

similar to the problems he experienced in the Waterloo campaign. Perhaps, worries over Ney's performance are what caused Napoleon to hope to meet the English first. Grouchy's appointment to command must also be questioned. Grouchy's appointment was his first major command. Accordingly, one suspects that Grouchy's fear of making a mistake clouded his actions. A glance at the map on the 18th should have warned Grouchy of the possible union of the Prussians and English. When his subordinates urged him to march to the sound of the guns, he should have done so. Had he done so it is just possible he may have made a difference in the outcome. Grouchy, however, refused, choosing to comply with the literal reading of his orders to move on Wavre. Grouchy was entirely competent, but not, it appears, entirely confident. Lastly, Napoleon made Soult, a proven field commander, his chief of staff. Soult had no experience in this position. Throughout the campaign he seems overshadowed by Napoleon. Had Soult been more vigorous in his duties, perhaps, Ney could have been more animated and Grouchy less doubtful. Napoleon's other key

appointments proved completely successful. General Rapp and Marshal Suchet expertly and easily defended the Rhine and Italian borders. Finally, Marshal Davout reinforced his sobriquet of the "Iron Marshal". Davout must receive credit for putting together the army at all. Following Waterloo, Davout recovered the army, enlarged it with new recruits and, by repulsing Blucher at Paris, forced the Allies to negotiate. Davout also advised Napoleon to disband the legislature before it could react to his defeat. Napoleon disagreed and was forced to abdicate for his second and final time. One can only wonder at the result of the campaign had Napoleon switched these key appointments around.

Combined with misapplication of the previous two tenets, Napoleon's failure to provide operational direction and tasks to subordinates looms large. Ney's failures from 15-17 June may in part be due to a lack of more specific and forceful direction. What direction did Napoleon provide Ney following the successful conclusion of the battle at Ligny? Only at eleven in the

morning of the 17th did Napoleon message Ney to continue his attack. Napoleon and Soult must have wondered about the result of Ney's battle, yet Ney appears to have received no further direction from his commander. Misapplication of this tenet contributed most to the failure of the campaign through Napoleon's failure to provide Grouchy timely orders to pursue the Prussians. Napoleon once said "...I will never lose a minute"[6] but, from the end of the battle of Ligny to the morning of the 17th, he lost at least twelve hours. Not until eleven on the morning of the 17th did Napoleon order a pursuit. This delay proved crucial to the whole campaign for it allowed the Prussians to regroup and eventually join Wellington at Waterloo. When Grouchy began his pursuit he first had to ascertain the direction of the Prussian withdrawal. Napoleon's failure to maintain contact with the Prussians thus wasted more time. By the time Grouchy regained contact, he faced only one Prussian corps; the other three were at Waterloo. Unbeknownst to Napoleon, he had reached his culminating point somewhere

during those lost twelve hours. The failure to conduct timely action during those twelve hours allowed Blucher to unite with Wellington.

The misapplication of three tenets of campaigning certainly contributed to Napoleon's defeat in what was, perhaps, his most brilliantly planned campaign. In this regard, study of his correct and incorrect applications of the tenets provide a rich source of material for anyone engaged in campaigning today. Were Napoleon's campaigning mistakes fatal to his campaign? Perhaps, but other errors contributed to his failure. At breakfast with his generals on the morning of 18 June, Napoleon stated "...we have no less than ninety percent of the chances in our favor and not ten against us."[3] Arguably, he may have been correct. By the morning of 18 June, the campaign may still have been his to win. However, failures at the tactical level cost him the battle and tactical success will always remain a critical element of campaigning.

ENDNOTES

1. William W. Mendl and Floyd T. Banks Jr., Campaign Planning, p.8.

2. J. Christopher Herold, The Age of Napoleon, p.408-409.

3. Napoleon I. Correspondence, Vol.XXVIII, No.22059, p.291, as cited by David G. Chandler, The Campaigns of Napoleon, p.1035.

4. Marshal Michel Ney, Documents ine'dits du Duc d'Elchingen,No.XIII, p.40, as cited by David G. Chandler, The Campaigns of Napoleon, p.1040.

5. Lord Chalfont, Waterloo, p.201.

6. David Howarth, Waterloo, p.36.

7. Lord Chalfont, Waterloo, p.201.

8. Thomas E. Griess, The Wars of Napoleon, p.157.

9. Lord Chalfont, Waterloo, p.79.

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